

Part III of our contribution to SE-23

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22

III. PROSPECTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE
MEC ORGANIZATION DURING 1952

A. What are the Overall Prospects for MEC in 1952?

Prospects for the acceptance of an inclusive MEC in 1952 are poor since nearly all the major factors involved are unfavorable.

B. Why are the Prospects Favorable or Unfavorable?

They are unfavorable mainly because the problems requiring adjustment between the sponsoring powers and the proposed area adherents present almost insuperable difficulties based on major differences in their concept of security.

C. Are the General Relationships of the Sponsoring Powers with
the Area Favorable or Unfavorable to MEC?

The general relationships are, on balance, highly unfavorable because:

1. Historical and psychological factors involving the UK are the most important cause of Arab opposition to the idea of MEC. Any scheme for the defense of the Near East which includes the UK among its sponsors will be viewed with suspicion in the Arab world. There is a desire to secure the elimination or revision of existing British treaty rights, especially in Egypt and Iraq, including the removal of British military forces from the area; a feeling that the MEC proposals are intended primarily to support the existing British special position; and fear of British intentions and doubt of British capabilities.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

23

2. Historical and psychological factors involving France are an important cause of Arab opposition to the idea of MEC. Any scheme for the defense of the Near East which includes France among its sponsors will be viewed with suspicion in the Arab states and denounced by nationalists as a plot to bring back or reinforce French influence; the return of French military forces to the area in peacetime will be rejected. The friction between France and the Arab peoples of North Africa is a strong adverse factor also.

3. Turkish support of MEC does not arouse the same degree of suspicion as is shown for the British and the French, but Turkish military forces would not be any more acceptable to the Arab states than those of the UK or France.

4. Sentiment in the Arab world toward the US in connection with MEC is less unfavorable than that toward the other three sponsors. Unfavorable attitudes, due to the US position on the Palestine issue and Arab belief that US military and other ties with Western Europe favor US support of British and French power and influence in the Arab world, are somewhat offset by: the fact that the US has no history of imperialism in the area; the conviction that the US is the strongest military power in the world; and the hope that the US may be prepared to strengthen the Arab states militarily without binding them to "unequal" treaties or interfering in their internal affairs. It is doubtful, however, that US forces would be welcome in the area in peacetime in other than a training or technical capacity.

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24

D. Does Sentiment with Respect to the USSR affect the Prospects for MEC? How?

Sentiment with regard to the USSR does not constitute a favorable factor for MEC. While many leaders in the very small upper circle are aware of the Soviet-Communist threat, the larger middle element which controls the balance of political power does not regard the USSR as a threat but as a useful counterweight and lever against the West. The vast ignorant bulk of the population is indifferent in the matter.

E. What Major Specific Problems Stand in the Way of Acceptance of MEC?

The Anglo-Egyptian dispute, general opposition to the stationing of foreign military forces in the area in peacetime, and Arab-Israeli tensions are major problems standing in the way of acceptance of MEC.

F. Is a Settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian Controversy Essential to the Establishment of an Inclusive MEC?

Yes. The dilemma is that acceptance of the MEC, which was partly designed to provide a solution for the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, now requires solution of the dispute for its own acceptance.

G. What Major Issues Stand in the Way of a Settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian Controversy and What Aspects of the MEC Concept are Likely to be Resisted by the Egyptians in Negotiating for a Settlement?

The major issues standing in the way of a settlement are a) the question of sole Egyptian sovereignty over the Sudan and b) the question of the stationing of foreign troops on Egyptian territory, which is the aspect of the MEC proposals which the Egyptians oppose most strongly.

H. What Would be the Effect on the MEC Negotiations of a US Offer to Station Token Forces in Egypt?

It is unlikely that a US offer to station token forces in Egypt

SECRET

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25

would improve the acceptability of MEC at the present time. If major issues now militating against MEC could be resolved, and in the unlikely event that Egypt and subsequently other Near Eastern states could be persuaded to accept the idea of peacetime garrisons of foreign troops, a US offer of token forces would increase the chances for the setting up of an effective MEC organization.

Such an offer would then be interpreted as a sign of a serious intention on the part of the US to help actively in the defense of the area; and the forces (despite objections from extremist elements) would probably be welcomed as a counterbalance to British predominance in the area.

I. Is Opposition to the Stationing of Foreign Military Forces in the Area in Peacetime an Insuperable Obstacle to MEC?

It is highly improbable that the Egyptian Government will, under MEC or otherwise, agree to the stationing of foreign troops on Egyptian soil in peacetime. On the other hand, it is quite probable that the Egyptian government would accept a very substantial foreign "civilian" technical contingent to maintain the MEC base in the Suez Canal in peacetime. The other states of the area are equally opposed to the stationing of foreign troops on their soil in peacetime but would probably follow the Egyptian lead in accepting technical contingents.

J. How do Arab-Israeli Tensions Affect the Acceptability of MEC?

The Arab States would not participate in an MEC which included Israel. Israel does not want an open association with MEC but instead special security guarantees from the US and UK. Inability to include

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26

both the Arab States and Israel would prevent land communication between Egypt and the rest of the area.

K. How Could the MEC Organization be Expected to Develop in the Event of a Solution of the UK-Egyptian Controversy?

If an Anglo-Egyptian settlement results in Egypt's adherence to MEC, the other Arab States will also join. Israel would feel its security to be seriously threatened if the Arab States joined MEC, but it would not itself participate. Israel would probably demand special security guarantees from the US and UK.

It is to be expected that there will be difficulties over the question of the nationality of the Supreme Army Commander — it is probable that several of the Arab States will object to his being British. Difficulties are also likely to be caused by rivalries among the Arab States. Iraq, for example, will resent any preference given to Egypt; Saudi Arabia will oppose any strengthening of Iraqi or Jordanian forces; and the strained relations between Iraq and Syria will be a problem. The problem of reconciling the Arab League Security Pact with MEC would have to be dealt with.

L. How Could the MEC Organization be Expected to Develop in the Event of a Failure of the UK and Egypt to Reach a Settlement of the Defense and Sudan Issues?

If the Anglo-Egyptian controversy is not settled, it is improbable that any of the other Arab States will join MEC.

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